

Thompson Rivers University responds to Kamloops professor's suspension

Prof. Derek Pyne remains suspended for what the university calls "defamatory language and accusations"

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The interim president of Thompson Rivers University, which is caught up in controversy over the suspension of an economics professor, has issued a statement saying he was not suspended because of his research.

Christine Bovis-Crossen has been under pressure to answer questions about the suspension of Derek Pyne over his paper exposing deceptive scholarly journals.

Pyne remains suspended for what the university has called his use of "defamatory language and accusations" after he published a paper stating that several of the Kamloops university's administrators and faculty had been published in journals that lacked peer review. He also wrote that many of those publishing in the journals were often awarded with research grants or promotions.

Postmedia has not reported on the accusations for legal reasons.

"Much of the media attention has incorrectly stated that faculty member Dr. Derek Pyne was disciplined for his research. This is not the case," said Bovis-Crossen.

"The discipline imposed is related to matters which I am unable to comment on due to both employment and privacy law. But I do want to be clear, to set the record straight, that academic freedom is fully protected at TRU under the collective agreement with our faculty association. Action taken against Dr. Pyne was not related to his specific research, the dissemination of his research, or the exercising of his right to academic freedom."

Bovis-Crossen said faculty members go through a robust process that involves a review of research activity and publishing credentials.

“Regarding disputes involving faculty, our focus is on resolving such disputes through the appropriate internal processes and in a way that is respectful of all individuals and their right to privacy,” she said.



Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops is embroiled in a battle over deceptive journals and academic freedom. It has 13,000 on-campus students and another 13,000 distance learners.

Pyne published a paper reporting almost half of the university’s three dozen business and economics professors and administrators had published articles in questionable research journals. Articles submitted for publication, unlike those in respectable journals, aren’t reviewed by other academics and authors are usually charged fees.

Pyne wrote in a newspaper article before his paper came out in April 2017 that his work created “friction” with the dean, and he said he was surprised the university did nothing to verify or address the issue.

The association representing Canadian university faculty has launched an investigation to determine whether Thompson Rivers University has violated Pyne’s academic freedom, but TRU is refusing to co-operate with it.

Pyne has called the faculty group’s involvement in the case a “positive development.” Pyne was suspended without pay in July by administrators at the Kamloops university. However, TRU later restored when Postmedia researched and wrote an article about his

work. He remains banned from teaching and going to the TRU campus, except in a few circumstances.

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